1 Interview Summaries

1.1 Focus Group for Department of Economic Development

Interview Type	Focus Group
Interview Location	Cross Building, Augusta
Interview Date	November 1, 2001
Summary Date	November 13, 2001
Interviewer	CDM / Michelle Thaler (thalerma@cdm.com)
Interviewed:	Dana Evans, Department of Labor, dana.evans@state.me.us Dana Doran, Central Maine Power, dana.doran@cmpco.com Dorothea Socea, Department of Economic and Community Development, dorothea.socea@state.me.us John Wainer, Maine State Housing Authority, jwainer@mainehousing.org Paula Weber, Maine State Housing Authority, pweber@mainehousing.org Todd Alexander, Maine & Co, business@maineco.org

1.1.1 Overview

Attendees represented people involved in economic development activities in Maine. The majority of attendees were employees of a state agency. Two participants worked for private firms. Participants included:

- Dana Evans, Department of Labor
- Dana Doran, Central Maine Power, Economic Development Coordinator
- Dorothea Socea, Department of Economic and Community Development, Information Technology Manager
- John Wainer, Maine State Housing Authority
- Paula M Weber, Maine State Housing Authority, Senior Information Services Analyst
- Todd Alexander, Maine & Company, Director, New Business Development

The Maine Department of Labor currently uses GIS. They have a number of copies of ArcView GIS software.

DECD does not currently use GIS. The Department recognizes the need and they want to know how to get started.

The Maine State Housing Authority does not currently use GIS. However, they are required to produce maps for HUD and would like to use GIS to produce these maps and perform analysis.

Central Maine Power uses GIS extensively in its business practice. The economic development coordinator works closely with CMP GIS staff to obtain data and perform analysis.

Maine & Company is beginning to work with CMP on economic development projects. Maine & Company sees itself as a GIS user, not as a data developer.

There was a wide mix of GIS experience in this group. Dana Doran uses GIS on a regular basis to support CMP business development. Some of the other attendees had passing knowledge of GIS and its capabilities but had not used GIS software, tools or data. Many participants were unaware of the extent of data available on the OGIS web site and were not knowledgeable in how to use the GIS data that does exist. Participants were generally supportive of a statewide GIS initiative that would facilitate education and data sharing among agencies and businesses.

1.1.2 Business Functions

The group discussed a number of GIS related business processes that their organizations are involved with on a regular basis. These business processes are:

- Business Attraction – Most participants were involved in attracting businesses to the State of Maine. This involves locating suitable real estate, analyzing labor data as well as infrastructure information. Additionally, business attraction involves assisting employers in finding a labor force to support new businesses, as well as housing and community services for staff that re-locate to the new site. Data such as Department of Labor statistics, wages data and infrastructure data exist in GIS format or in database format that can easily be linked to GIS data.
- Manage Existing Development- Managing existing development is linked with business attraction in that the same data sets that support business attraction will help manage existing development. Additional data sets needed for managing development include zoning and environmental data layers.
- Other Business Processes – Community Development and tourist attraction were two other business processes mentioned by participants. These processes were not common to multiple participants, however, there are a number of data sets that can be used to support these business practices that are also important to the major business practices discussed.

1.1.3 Data

A number of spatial data sets are utilized to support the business processes discussed above. These include:

- Parcels – boundary information as well as ownership information. Parcel data was ranked among the highest data need of the group
- Infrastructure data – this type of data includes Roads (E911) as well as utility data for water, sewer, drain, electric, treatment plant locations, rail, and gas. These types of data layers ranked as high as parcel data for need and usefulness
- Labor market data layers – including census data, department of labor statistics and businesses location by SIC code
- Political boundary data – including town boundaries and county boundaries as well as voting districts

- State defined areas – these data layers include hunting zones, service center areas, and hospital service areas
- Wetlands
- Zoning – participants were aware that many towns have different zoning codes, but a generalized zoning layer was thought to be useful
- Shoreline zoning – particularly useful for development projects along the coast or waterways and water bodies
- Sea ports and Airport locations
- Topo maps
- Crime statistics including general crime mapping data
- Census data which might include housing data, median home sales, and employment data – this type of data is useful when trying to attract businesses who have staff to re-locate
- Aerial Mapping and Aerial Imagery. Different agencies and organizations have different accuracy needs for mapping. Most participants viewed Aerial photos as nice to have but not essential
- Land ownership showing State lands / state parks, Indian lands, land owned by private industry such as paper company lands
- A list of road names – many participants noted that different agencies have different road names. It was felt that road names should be aligned and there should be one road name file

Participants also noted that it would be useful to have a geographic index or catalog of locations where comprehensive plans have been completed. The data layer may point to the entity that created or updated the plan.

Participants were not particularly concerned with the scale of the data. Most agreed that town-scale data is sufficient for their needs.

1.1.4 Statewide GIS Initiative Needs

Participants had a number of ideas for initiatives that the State could undertake to support GIS in Maine.

- Education/Outreach – The experiences of the participants indicated that local governments often need support ranging from technical assistance to guidance with GIS implementation. Specific needs discussed include:
    - Resource Guide – Many agencies know that GIS is a useful technology but are unsure how it applies specifically to their business practices. A resource guide including information on how GIS is used to support different types of work would be valuable. This resource guide should also include steps on how to get started using data that already exists (see Data section below)

- Training and Support – Participants expressed the desire for training and continuing support. The training should address issues such as how to access data, and how to use desktop GIS software or GIS applications (if the state provides applications). Participants who were just getting started or had limited GIS experience also expressed the desire for a type of "help desk" support where they could call a number and a state employee could answer some basic GIS and data questions.

- Data – There is a need both for spatial data and for indices of data that exists. This is a need for the focus group participants, as well as for GIS users across the state. While the creation of data would be useful to some, it may not be of the appropriate scale, accuracy or content for all users. In addition, data would need to be maintained so that it remained useful. Specific data related needs discussed by the group include:
    - Metadata – Participants indicated that one barrier to data sharing is a lack of trust in existing data. Datasets must have complete and up to date metadata about who created the data, method and date of data collection, purpose for the data, accuracy, scale, etc. so that potential future end users can determine if it is appropriate for their needs. Participants also felt that the agency or individual responsible for data creation or updates should be listed, along with contact information.
    - Standard Attribute Types – Participants felt it would be useful to have a set of standard attributes for data to increase the value of data to potential future users. For example, towns have their own zoning codes. It would be helpful to have common codes when evaluating development projects that cross town boundaries.
    - Security – Participants discussed the need to maintain security. They acknowledged that not all data should be shared but no details were discussed.

- Hardware and Software – A number of participants have limited access to GIS software and hardware that is not optimal to support GIS activities. Most expressed a desire for guidance on hardware specs appropriate for supporting GIS activities. Some noted the lack of large format plotters in many offices. Participants felt that state agencies, in particular, should share plotting resources. A state GIS organization could maintain a list of available plotters for use by all agencies. The state could contribute to the maintenance of these plotters.

1.1.5 Stakeholder Roles

The group discussed the following GIS stakeholders, and the appropriate role for each in a statewide GIS initiative.

- State – Participants felt the state should play a coordinator role. Tasks that fall under this role include
    - Education – help organizations get started with GIS and support use through supporting discussion groups and inter-agency user groups

    - Data development and Maintenance – the state should play a role in creating data and ensuring that standards for accuracy, maintenance and documentation are followed.

- DECD – Sees itself as a data interpreter, assisting users to interpret their data for use in analysis and mapping
- Labor – Sees itself as a data developer and user performing some analysis
- Maine State Housing Authority – sees itself as mainly a user of data
- CMP – develops data for use with its own business practices. Some of this data is private and would not be shared. Other data would be generalized and shared with state agencies for use in economic development activities
- Maine & Co – Sees itself as strictly a data user, they would make use of existing data for analysis but would not produce any data themselves

1.1.6 Major Benefits and Cost Justification

This group identified a number of benefits to a statewide GIS initiative that supports education, data sharing and coordination. These benefits include:

- Increased data sharing which will reduce the need for various agencies and organizations to produce multiple copies of similar data sets
- Centralized location for data storage. Having a centralized location for data storage will eliminate the need for many agencies to have hardware capable of storing large data sets. This will reduce hardware costs
- Confidence in data will be aided by consistent metadata.
- Residents of the state will benefit from a more informed public policy due to more accurate analysis by public officials. Increased accuracy in analysis will be realized when users make appropriate use of data based on the data accuracy and information that can be found in metadata files.

Overall, participants felt that a statewide GIS initiative would increase GIS use and spread knowledge about the appropriate use GIS technology tools.